

INTERVIEW SKILLS BUILDING

FACILITATOR GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

This 45-minute session provides students with insight to the interviewing process and it prepares them for common interview questions. Students will evaluate different responses to interview questions and generate potential questions to pose during the interview. In order to cover the material completely, including follow-up and optional activities, 80 minutes is recommended.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to explain the purpose and process of an interview.
2. Students will be able to identify common interview questions.
3. Students will prepare marketable responses to interview questions.
4. Students will be able to prepare questions for employers.
5. Students will learn effective self-presentation and appropriate behavior for interview situations.

MATERIALS

Hand Out 1 – Interview Planning Form

Hand Out 2 – Sample Questions

Hand Out 3 – Mock Interview

Advanced Techniques for Work Search, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

OVERVIEW AND TIMELINES

Introduction – Purpose of an Interview	1 Minute
Types of Interviews	2 Minutes
Interview Planning and Preparation	2 Minutes
Responding to Interview Questions	10 Minutes
Practice Option – Out of the Hat	10 Minutes
Types of Questions: Past, Present and Future	5 Minutes
Interview Day	10 Minutes
Follow Up and Wrap Up	5 Minutes

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ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION – PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

Question the group about the purpose of an interview – it serves to determine if a job applicant meets the job requirements. Emphasize that employment interviews serve the purpose of allowing candidates and employers a chance to meet each other, ask each other questions, and decide whether an appropriate working match is made.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Ask the group, “What types of interviews can they expect?” Summarize and discuss a few options that may be used in different stages of the interview process:

- Phone Interviews – may be used initially to determine if you meet the basic skills criteria
- In-person – may be a one-on-one interview or a panel interview

Note to Teachers:

Make students aware of screening tools that may be used before, during or after in-person interviews. Applicants may be required to demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform the job. Dexterity, hand-eye coordination, math and data entry are all examples (see page 7 for information on Human Rights' issues).

INTERVIEW PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Ask the group what preliminary questions they would ask when an employer calls to set up an interview:

- Date / time / place
- Who is interviewing and name(s) of individual(s)
- What to bring to the interview
- Confirm that you have a portfolio and that you would like to bring it to the interview
- Confirm that the interview is for the job you applied for. Request an in-depth job description, more than what was in the advertisement

Distribute **Interview Planning Form Hand Out**. This form is a helpful tool when preparing for future interviews.

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Emphasize the importance of researching employers prior to the interview so that a candidate knows as much as possible about **the work, the company** and the **expectations of the job**. This shows a high level of organization and preparation, and it builds confidence going into the interview.

RESPONDING TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Ask students why it is important to understand their skills and qualifications. Candidates must be able to speak in a detailed way about their skills and abilities so that a prospective employer will understand clearly what they can offer.

The best way to speak clearly about skills is to be able to tell a brief story, with facts and real information about your skill, and the way you have used it in school activities, home chores or with a prior employer. Then relate that skill to the potential job. Examples:

- *I was responsible for providing accurate change and for using a computerized till at my prior position with Company X. In an entire year, I had no mistakes or errors in my cash or my cash-outs. My ability to be accurate with cash and till operations may be valuable to your company.*
- *During football practice, I have to keep daily attendance and prepare equipment prior to practice. My coaches have described me as reliable, independent, and as a person who takes initiative.*
- *I am responsible for the daily feeding and care of four horses. This work requires that I be outside working in all weather without being asked. This demonstrates my ability to be motivated, punctual and responsible which are all skills important to this work.*
- *I was a babysitter for a family with three children. I prepared meals, did general clean up around the house, as well as other chores and errands. I babysat for this family for two years, and they have given me a letter of reference that describes me as responsible, caring and tidy. I have this letter with me in my portfolio for you to read. These traits may be valuable to this work as a Playground Supervisor.*

Ask students to brainstorm possible questions to anticipate and questions they may want to ask. See Top Up List For Facilitators.

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Top Up List For Facilitators

Encourage students to use their portfolios to back up their answers!

Common Interview Questions From the Employer

- Tell me about yourself.
- Describe your last job.
- Why did you leave your last job?
- What did you like best about your last job?
- What did you dislike about your last job?
- What is your favorite subject at school? What is your least favorite subject?
- What are your three greatest strengths?
- What would you consider to be an area for development?
- Where do you see yourself three years from now? Five years?
- Where have you demonstrated responsibility in your past work?
- Tell me how you feel team sports contributed to your skills?
- Are you involved in any school-related activities that demonstrate your skills?
- Tell me why we should hire you?

Common Questions the Candidate Can Ask During the Interview

- What are some of the responsibilities of this position?
- Why are you hiring?
- What are the busiest times of business?
- How can I make a difference to this business?
- What are the hours of work?
- What is the expected dress code?
- How is technology changing this organization?
- How does the company develop their employees?
- What training is provided for their employees (safety)?
- What are the advancement opportunities within this organization?
- Where does this company expect to be in five years?

Note: Students need to be sensitive to the fact that questions about wages may lead employers to believe that money is their major interest. However, money is a factor when considering a job offer. General questions may be asked:

- What is the entry-level pay for a job like this?
- What is the pay range for this position?

Distribute **Sample Questions Hand Out**. If time permits, the **Out of the Hat (Practice Option #2)** on page 10 may be used.

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TYPES OF QUESTIONS – PAST, PRESENT OR FUTURE

Students should understand that interview questions take many different forms. Students must prepare to respond to a broad variety of questions with confidence and be able to provide detailed, positive information quickly and comfortably. It is inadequate to respond to any interview question with a simple “yes” or “no”. It is important to deliver a full and positive answer that reflects experience, skills and attitudes that may be valuable to the employer. Questions can be divided into three general categories: PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE.

PAST

These types of questions focus on past performance, experience and education. These questions may sound like:

- Tell me about your experience in customer service?
- Where did you learn to operate a cash register?
- How many times have you had to work with a team?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an angry customer.

Students will have to be prepared to share a detailed, specific story about their skills based on their past experience. Answers might be:

- I have worked in customer service for the past three summers. My family runs a small restaurant and I have worked as a hostess and waitress since I was fourteen. I realized very quickly how important service is to our business, and I learned to approach each customer promptly and with a smile to ensure their satisfaction.
- My school operates a small concession for students during lunch hour and sports events. I have volunteered in the lunch hour concession where I was responsible for operating a cash register and for providing change during very busy lunch rush.
- Through high school sports I have been a part of a team. This required communication and cooperation. Additionally, our family farm demands a lot of teamwork, and communication is important to ensure safety.
- In my past work at XYZ Sports, I had a customer return an item and the customer was very dissatisfied and wanted to complain. I made sure to let the customer know that I understood their concerns, and I quickly got the manager to help me find a solution for the customer. In the end, the customer was well served and left happy.

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PRESENT

Questions that focus on current availability, abilities, certifications and skills are PRESENT questions. These questions may include:

- Do you have a driver's license?
- Are you able to work weekends?
- Do you have current WHMIS training?

Again, students must be comfortable going into specific detail and sharing information with employers. Students may be compelled to give simple "YES" or "NO" responses, but this is an important opportunity to provide meaningful information. Responses might be:

- I have a clean class 5 license and I have access to a reliable vehicle. My driving experience includes operating a standard transmission both in the city and on the highway safely.
- Throughout the summer months I am available for full time work during the days, evenings and weekends. When school resumes, I am available for work on evenings and weekends.
- I completed WHMIS training last month and have experience in an industrial kitchen where chemical safety was tremendously important.

FUTURE

Future questions focus on how you will handle the responsibilities of the position. They are focused on your future performance.

- How would you handle a situation where you were going to be late completing a project?
- A peer working with you in the store is always receiving phone calls that impact negatively on customer service. Tell me what steps you would take to deal with this.

It is important to know that there is no "RIGHT" answer. Students need to be comfortable asking clarifying questions and defining the resources available to them. Potential answers:

- If I knew I would be late, I would immediately communicate this to my supervisor and request any help that I might need to complete the project as quickly as possible.
- I think I would ask if my manager was aware of the problem. If so, I would just make an extra effort to provide excellent customer service and be available to help out wherever possible.

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Note to Teachers – Human Rights Questions

Discussion may arise about inappropriate questions asked that are not relevant to the job requirements. It is illegal for employers to ask questions related to ethnic origin, marital status, religion, gender, weight, criminal record, disability and other health issues. Examples of these questions include: “When were you born?” “That’s an interesting last name, where is it from?” It is important that students feel confident asking employers questions in response such as: “How is that important to this job or company?” or “Why do you ask?” Employers may only ask about age if it is related to age-sensitive work like a server in a licensed establishment, or to nighttime working hours. If an employer asks questions about age, students should ask how it is relevant to the job. Employers do not need a Social Insurance Number prior to time of hiring.

INTERVIEW DAY

Have students brainstorm red flags for the interview. Encourage students to “put on their employer’s hat” to think about how they would like a candidate to appear and behave at the interview. Note responses on whiteboard or chalkboard. See Top Up List for Facilitators.

Top Up List For Facilitators - Red Flags for Presentation at Interview

- Late
- Forget your resume
- Forget your portfolio
- Untidy hair
- Overload of jewelry, piercing or tattoos
- Smell of cigarette smoke
- Chewing gum
- Fidgeting or uncomfortable
- Poor posture
- Poor speaking skills, slang, swearing
- Respond with only yes and no answers
- Speak poorly of previous employer
- Lack of enthusiasm and confidence
- Not demonstrating where you can add value
- Not prepared for basic interview questions
- Does not listen carefully, cuts interviewer off
- Leaves without asking any questions
- Does not follow up with a thank you card
- No firm handshake
- Lack of eye contact
- Talking too much about topics NOT relevant to the question
- Forget to bring three references, if not included with your resume
- Dressed in street clothes – crumpled, dirty, shoes untied
- Wear baseball cap or sunglasses into interview

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Refer back to the red flags and open up a general discussion with students about what presentation flaws reveal about interview candidates. Examples:

- Late Arrival for Interview – shows the candidate will not be punctual for work, shows disrespect for employer's time
- Scruffy Appearance – shows disrespect for self and employer, does not appear serious about the position, will not represent the company well

Practice Option #1 – Game Show may be used if time permits.

During the interview, remember to:

- Be confident – eye contact, body language, show interest
- Tell interviewer(s) your understanding of the job / role
- Bring your up-to-date portfolio – use it as a lead in to answer certain questions showing how you can add value to the organization
- Take notes – listen / clarify questions
- Pause – think before you speak and ask for clarification if you do not understand a question

After the interview, remember to:

- Thank the interviewer(s) for the interview opportunity
- Provide a firm handshake
- Ask for clarification about when a decision will be made

FOLLOW UP

Refer to the **Sample Thank You Note** at the conclusion of the **Interview Planning Form Hand Out**.

- Always send a thank you note or e-mail thanking interviewer(s) for their time and consideration. It is helpful if you ask for a business card at the interview. This will provide the correct title and spelling of the interviewer's name.
- Provide any additional information you may have forgotten to tell them or clarify an answer to a specific interview question.
- If you don't get the job offer, phone to ask for constructive feedback.
- Handling rejection means focusing on the positive!
- Remember that every interview is a valuable experience; they give you experience and exposure to the world of work.

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WRAP UP

An interview requires an investment of your time and energy to market the best possible “you”. Interviews require you to plan and practice selling your skills and abilities. Interviewing is a two-way process geared towards making a match between an employee and an employer. The only way to get the best match is for parties to interview each other. Distribute Advanced Techniques For Work Search, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, to each student.

Believe in yourself and treat each interview as an opportunity to learn something and improve your skills!

GAME SHOW (Practice Option #1) – Approximately 20 minutes

Recruit three students. Select based on different interests and social groups. Assign them the position of judges. Set them apart from the rest of the group. Break the rest of the group into two teams. Separate them so that they face each other. Have each team delegate one person to present their information to the Judges.

Select a potential occupation for the activity, based on the profile, interests and experience of your group. Examples:

Playground Supervisor, Tree Planter, Construction Clean-up, Babysitter, Farm Hand, Tattoo Artist, Fast Food Restaurant Worker, Golf Course Maintenance Worker, Zookeeper’s Assistant.

Write the occupation on the chalkboard or whiteboard. Outline the game:

Each team will be given the same common interview questions. They are required to generate the best possible answer for the occupation listed on the board. The teams will have two minutes to collaborate before they present their response. The team will delegate a member to respond based on the collaboration of the group. Each team will respond to four questions in total. It may be important to model a response to get the group started.

The judges will evaluate and score on a scale from one to ten the caliber of each response. The judges may need to justify their scores, so they must be specific.

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For the position of **Housekeeper**:

Question: *What is an area of development or improvement for you?*

Answer: *Unfortunately, I do not have a driver's license or a car, but I have worked out an agreement with my brother who drives to get me to and from work until September when I can get my license.*

This shows a person understanding the requirements of the position, while demonstrating how they have compensated for the weakness.

Question: *Can you describe three strengths that you have?*

Answer: *I am a reliable person, who has never missed a day of work at my past job, nor ever been late. I am able to be motivated to work alone and complete my work unsupervised and I am attentive to detail to best serve the customer's needs.*

This answer clearly addresses the needs of the employer and gives detailed information relevant to past employment. The work searcher understands the skills necessary to do this job well and it shows!

OUT OF THE HAT (Practice Option #2) – Approximately 10-15 minutes

Facilitator hands out small pieces of paper onto which students jot down 1-2 challenging interview questions. All papers are folded in half and put into a "hat". Questions are drawn out of the hat by individual students and read out loud to class. Individual student attempts to respond to the challenging question, with follow-up ideas coming from the larger group and facilitator. This activity provides an excellent opportunity to practice interviewing skills in a supportive environment. Activity may be interspersed throughout the lesson or undertaken all at once.

MOCK INTERVIEWS (Practice Option #3) – Approximately 15 minutes

Facilitator asks for 2 volunteers to participate in a 10-minute mock interview. Select an occupation that the students are interested in being interviewed for. The facilitator picks 8 questions from the **Sample Questions Hand Out** and conducts a one-on-one interview with each student. Allow students 5 minutes to prepare for the interview and ask them to select 3 questions they would ask the employer. Class may watch interviews or they may be done one-on-one with students. Use **Mock Interview Evaluation Hand Out**.



INTERVIEW PLANNING FORM

Position Interviewing For:

Company Name:

Company Address:

Contact Person or Interviewer:

Phone:

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Checklist:

Resume / References

☐

Portfolio

☐

Note Paper

☐

Pens

☐

Description of work:

Three strengths I offer:

1.

2.

3.

Two areas for improvement I have are:

1.

2.

Activities or work to mention (include volunteer work):



Educational accomplishments to mention:

Training accomplishments and other certifications to mention:

Home responsibilities to mention:

Team sports or extracurricular activities to mention:

Questions to ask:

1.

2.

3.

After the interview:

Follow up required:

Employer decision expected by:

Thank you sent: ☐

SAMPLE THANK YOU CARD

Dear

:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss (position) on Tuesday. I am more convinced than ever that I would be able to contribute to your objectives. Please feel free to call me at 342-#### if there is any additional information I can provide to help you in your decision-making.

Sincerely,

Don't forget to sign!

Source: Advanced Techniques for Work Search



SAMPLE QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS TO EXPECT:

- *Tell me about yourself.*
- *What is your favourite thing about school?*
- *What is your least favourite?*
- *What are your three greatest strengths?*
- *What are three of your weaknesses (areas for development)?*
- *Where do you see yourself in three years? Five years?*
- *Where have you demonstrated responsibility in your past work?*
- *How do team sports contribute to your skills?*
- *Are you involved in any school-related activities that demonstrate your skills? If so, what school-related activities and what skills do you use?*

TOP UP WITH YOUR OWN LIST:

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER:

- *What are some of the responsibilities of this position?*
- *Why are you hiring?*
- *What are the busiest times of business?*
- *How can I make a difference to this business?*
- *Tell me what a typical day would look like in this position.*
- *What kinds of advancement opportunities are there?*
- *What are the hours of work?*
- *What kind of training is provided (e.g. safety)?*
- *What is the expected dress code?*
- *How is technology changing this company?*
- *Where does this company expect to be in five years?*

TOP UP WITH YOUR OWN LIST:



MOCK INTERVIEW

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Candidate: _____

Company/Position Applied For: _____

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Introduction: | <input type="radio"/> Introduced self clearly |
| | <input type="radio"/> Smiled |
| | <input type="radio"/> Firm handshake |
| Organization/documentation: | <input type="radio"/> Arrived on time |
| | <input type="radio"/> Cover letter |
| | <input type="radio"/> Resume |
| | <input type="radio"/> Portfolio |
| Grooming/Body Language: | <input type="radio"/> Well groomed (neat and clean) |
| | <input type="radio"/> Dressed appropriate for position |
| | <input type="radio"/> Positive body language (sat up straight, leaned forward, did not slouch) |
| Interview Skills: | <input type="radio"/> Answered questions confidently |
| | <input type="radio"/> Evidence of preparation for basic interview questions |
| | <input type="radio"/> Identified skills relevant to the position |
| | <input type="radio"/> Responses were specific, detailed and appropriate to the questions |
| | <input type="radio"/> Asked questions about position/company |
| | <input type="radio"/> Initiated use of portfolio |
| | <input type="radio"/> Demonstrated enthusiasm |
| Closing: | <input type="radio"/> Thanked interviewer |
| | <input type="radio"/> Shook hands |

Additional comments for students: _____
